

The Barnes Dance

George Branyan, DDOT Pedestrian Program Coordinator

What we're doing here is we're bringing back a Barnes Dance which is a signal timing that gives pedestrians an all-red phase where they can cross diagonally, parallel to traffic or straight across, either way.

Traffic Control Officer

Okay, everybody can walk.

Pedestrian

This was done back in the 60's, 70's, all the way until the 80's. What was old is really new now, right? Ha, ha.

Theresa Johnson, Traffic Control Officer

Can I give you some information to read about the new crosswalk? Can I give you some information to read about the crosswalk?

I'm telling them that there's a new cross pattern and at a particular time all the lights will be red and you can cross in every direction, diagonal, across.

Two Pedestrians

That was fun.

It was awesome!

Why?

Cause, they were very happy, they were trying to get us to dance...

We saw someone got hit awhile ago so this is really nice, to have this.

George Branyan, DDOT Pedestrian Program Coordinator

One other issue: we're trying to make sure the drivers understand they cannot turn when they go through this intersection. That's one of the ways we're making it safer from pedestrians, by eliminating all turns so no pedestrians have any conflicts with any turning vehicles while they're in the crosswalk.

Wasim Raja, DDOT Traffic Signal/ITS Manager

We wanted people to cross in all directions. That is what is happening, but we had to take away time from the vehicle phases so we'll have a little bit of a backup. But I think this turning prohibition will make it work eventually.

(Whistle)

Penn Quarter Resident

I think it's great. I think it's a good way to improve pedestrian traffic, to keep the intersection more orderly. I've seen it in Pasadena, California. I thought it worked well there and I think it can work well here.

Pedestrian

Everyone should come down here. You know what, since the Capitals aren't in the playoffs I say come down here and walk straight across the street.

(Whistle)

George Branyan, DDOT Pedestrian Program Coordinator

The engineer, the traffic engineer who innovated this concept back in the 1950's, was a man named Henry Barnes and when he did this in downtown Denver at many, many intersections the newspapers first predicted gloom and doom and then when it worked really well and people loved it they said people were dancing in the streets they were so happy with the signal timing.

Wasim Raja, DDOT Traffic Signal/ITS Manager

If it's a success we'll probably expand it in the District, but again, I'm keeping my fingers crossed right now.

Traffic Control Officer

We're dancing, we're dancing.